

The High Value of Courage

Vivian Langley participated in the Minneapolis Race for a Cure for many years. As a breast cancer survivor, she looked forward to each race and the opportunity to add another ribbon to her hat. Pretty soon, she had a cap full.

"One year, a lady came up and told me, 'Someday, I hope my cap is as full as yours.' When I asked when she was diagnosed, she said, 'Last week,'" says Langley. "I encouraged her to take it one day at a time and wished her well with her journey. I offered the hope she would have a lot of ribbons in her cap, too." Even with a few bumps in the road, Langley believes her longevity offers this encouragement to others.

The few bumps in the road Langley described occurred over a 23-year period. Diagnosed with stage two breast cancer at 34 years old, Langley endured a mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Cancer-free for seven years, she then experienced a persistent cough she would not ignore.

"I became very diligent about my health and knowing my body. This time they found a pea-sized tumor in my lung," says Langley. Surgery occurred followed by stem cell replacement.

Doctors found cancer again in Langley's lungs after moving to Auburn. Then at age 55, doctors discovered a recurrence in her lungs and lymph nodes. Two spots were removed, but two remained to be treated with chemother-

apy and a hormone inhibitor. In August 2013, doctors discovered the cancer had jumped to her liver in small, but numerous places.

"We've had to treat my cancer like a chronic disease. We have options and a great team of doctors who are open to all opinions. We take one day at a time because those days can add up to years. I don't really like numbers," says Langley.

Throughout it all, beginning with Langley's involvement with Race for a Cure, the development officer at the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University uses her experience to help others. She has visited with women diagnosed with breast cancer to offer encouragement. "I'm determined to offer a message of courage and faith. Courage to face the challenge ahead and faith to know you don't go it alone," says Langley. "I always wanted to do as much as I could and kept praying for God to let me do some good."

Prayers were answered in the form of the non-profit Mahatma Shuffle Golf Tournament. "It was supposed to say 'Scramble,' but one of my friends said 'Shuffle' instead, and it stuck," laughs Langley.

A Montgomery native, Langley grew up playing softball with a group of women in Auburn who remained close friends. When one passed away from breast cancer, the remaining group hosted a golf tournament to raise funds for women



Vivian Langley

going through cancer treatments. Langley became the first beneficiary of the tournament while enduring stem cell replacement. She subsequently moved back to east Alabama where the women continue the annual golf tourney.

Langley also donates personally to the East Alabama Medical Center Foundation. She emphasizes the importance of early detection made possible through programs like the EAMC Breast Health Fund which offers free mammograms.

"It's about doing something important for someone else, like the work at the EAMC Cancer Center. Having received such outstanding care through the Cancer Center, I feel we all need to give back—not just with our time and energy, but also with our financial support. Being a four-time cancer survivor due to early detection, I put a high value on that."